

TOWN OF MANSFIELD ■ FOUR CORNERS WATER AND SEWER ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Special Meeting Minutes ■ August 26, 2014
Town Council Chambers

Members Present: Rawn, Hart, Ryan, Raymond, J. Coite (representing T. Tussing), M. Reich

Guests Present: Derek Dilaj, Weston & Sampson Engineers; D. Gillette, Day Pitney

Staff Present: Carrington, Painter, Trahan

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Rawn.

Public Comment

- Pat Suprenant noted that she does not believe that the state legislation approving a grant-in-aid for the Four Corners sewer project is a guarantee of funding and questioned whether the grant would be subject to CEPA review. She requested that the references to semi-rural in the draft endorsement letter be changed to 'rural' and asked the Town's bond counsel to answer whether the referendum question would bind the community to funding the total \$9M project cost if a \$3M grant isn't received.

Business

- **Four Corners Sewer Project – Election/Referendum Law Restrictions.** This item was moved up on the agenda. Hart introduced Douglas Gillette, the Town's bond counsel, who proceeded to give an overview of referendum laws with regard to use of municipal resources after a project has been put to referendum. Once the Town Council sets a referendum date, the Town can only use municipal resources to provide explanatory text and materials that are neutral and do not advocate a position on the question. Authorization to develop these materials must be provided by the Town Council, and the Town attorney would have to review them before publication to ensure that they met the statutory requirements for explanatory materials. Gillette also suggested that the Town seek an advisory opinion from the staff attorneys at the State Elections Commission as to whether the materials comply with the statutes and regulations governing such materials. Gillette noted that Town officials could advocate for the project as private individuals provided that their personal expenses do not exceed established donation limits.

Raymond questioned how the Town would be able to provide the promised responses to questions asked at the community information meetings given the limitations that go into effect after September 2nd if the Council votes to put the question to referendum. Hart noted that the project team has been compiling a summary of questions and answers and that it would be put on the project website on Wednesday, August 27th; however, due to the limitations on use of municipal resources, they would be removed from the website if the Council sends the project to referendum. Gillette suggested that some of the information might be able to be included in explanatory materials. Gillette also noted that the Town can respond to constituent requests for information; however, those responses must be directed to the individual asking and cannot be broadcast to others. Raymond also questioned how the public would know that the answers would be on the website; Hart noted that meeting attendees were advised that answers would be posted on the website.

Gillette reviewed the proposed referendum question with members and addressed questions regarding wording; whether approval of the referendum would allow the Town to proceed if the grant were not received (it would); what actions would be needed by the Town Council if the referendum were to fail to

move the project forward using non-tax revenue sources; and questions related to the state process for authorizing the funds through the bond commission.

- **Four Corners Sewer Project Presentation/Update.** Derek Dilaj from Weston & Sampson Engineers briefly ran through the presentation that had been provided at the August 22nd public hearing and answered questions from members regarding septic failures; potential for locating the sewer line on the same side of the street as the water line; potential cost savings from coordination with Connecticut Water Company; and revaluation of assessments as properties develop. Dilaj noted that wherever possible they are designing the sewer line to be within the same lane of traffic as the water line to reduce repaving costs. Potential savings cannot be quantified until CTDOT identifies pavement restoration requirements as part of the permitting process.
- **Four Corners Sewer Project-Draft project endorsement letter.** Hart provided an overview of the draft endorsement letter prepared by staff.

Reich MOVED, Ryan seconded to approve the draft endorsement letter.

Raymond expressed disappointment that members were given insufficient time to review the draft letter in advance of the meeting. After discussion, members suggested several changes to the letter including: changing references from 'semi-rural' to 'rural,' adding language regarding consistency with state and regional plans, adding a reference to the Town's location in The Last Green Valley, clarifying language regarding the status of the state grant-in-aid and other minor editorial comments.

After discussion, Reich MOVED to amend the motion to authorize the Chair to submit the letter on behalf of the committee with the changes suggested during discussion. Ryan accepted the friendly amendment and the amended motion passed unanimously.

Painter will revise the letter per committee comments and distribute to members. Members were asked to provide comments to Painter for inclusion in the final letter for Rawn's signature/approval.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda M. Painter, AICP
Director of Planning and Development